

It seems not well appreciated, however, that the beetle is also to be found among dung and other farmyard debris. I found 5 examples in a small volume of sievings from a heap of old manure and rotten hay near Headley, Surrey in January 1985. It was presumably breeding there for, in November, a further few handfuls of sievings produced another 20 specimens. My friend Peter Hammond has told me that, in 1983, he found a number of examples in a manure heap in Richmond Park (where we have both taken it in its traditional habitat). On the continent, it is stated to occur 'in dry dung and compost; also in rotten wood' (Franz and Besuchet, 1970 in *Die Käfer Mitteleuropas* 3 ed. Freude, Harde & Lohse).

I wonder if the breeding of *S. rufus* in farmyard debris is a relatively new phenomenon. In Britain, *S. rufus* has a reputation for being rare. Fowler (1889, *The Coleoptera of the British Isles*) wrote that he knew of only two British specimens and, later, the late Revd. E. J. Pearce (1974, *Entomol. mon. Mag.* 110: 13) recorded that, in his many years of collecting, he had found only one example. The collectors of Fowler's time, and of the generation which followed, were certainly familiar with beetles of farmyard debris. In the days of the horse, there were almost certainly many manure heaps about, which suggests that the beetle used not to occur in this habitat. It would be interesting to know whether there is any evidence of a similar change in habitat preference on the continent. J. A. OWEN, 8 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3PU.

EDINBURGH'S CLOUDED, DRAB SUMMER. — On 15.viii.1985 I found a fully grown larva of the noctuid moth *Orthosia incerta* (Hufnagel) on a footpath beneath an avenue of trees running across The Meadows, Edinburgh. Lime (*Tilia x europaea*) was overhead, but sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*) were nearby. The caterpillar was alive (though terminally mauled by passing feet) and I could find no evidence of any disease or parasitism that might have delayed its development. Mid August is a remarkably late date for larvae of this species, and it illustrates very well what a flop the early part of the summer of 1985 was, particularly in Scotland.

In fact the late part of the summer was no better, and 24 days on I nearly lost my marbles altogether when I found a queen wasp in hibernation in my chilly greenhouse on 9.ix.1985; only discovering later that it is not unusual for that particular species, *Vespula rufa* (L.), to enter hibernation as early as August. At the time I suffered only a flash of "surely it can't still be waiting for spring 1985 like the rest of us", but it took longer to quell the despair that we were not even going to get autumn this year. Eventually I got it all under control to be merely encouraged to see that social wasps, all of which have been very scarce locally, have managed to produce queens at all in this sunless year! M. R. SHAW, Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.